JFK High Students Know Little of Jackie

To the students at the only school in the Los Angeles Unified School District to bear the name of John F. Kennedy, the death of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis was another sad page in the history books.

Just don't ask them to write it.

At John F. Kennedy High School in Granada Hills, student reaction to the former First Lady's death on Thursday was long on inaccuracies and short on knowledge, although many expressed the Generation X version of sadness.

"It sucks," said Kathy May, 15, a 10th-grader from Granada Hills, who acknowledged, however: "I didn't know that much about her."

Most students said the school had taught them virtually nothing about President Kennedy's widow. Some didn't have to say much to prove it.

"That was her ex-husband, huh?" said James McMann, 15, a freshman from Chatsworth.

Others said what they learned had mostly come from television, and even that was confusing.

"I heard that they had read her her rights before she died," said 15-year-old Angie Neal of Granada Hills, confusing the police booking procedure with the last rites given by a priest. "Could you please explain that to me before you go?"

Only one student interviewed during the campus lunch hour Friday was able to express more than a few words about the former First Lady's character.

And that was because she could relate to her.

"I hear she was a great woman, a very strong woman," said Sharon Meyer, 16, a ninth-grader from North Hills. "We don't realize that until we lose someone close to us."

Meyer recently lost a cousin in an auto accident and a grandmother to natural causes.

But there was hope on campus that the generation could still learn to appreciate Mrs. Onassis: His name is Richard Sprouse, teacher of U.S. government.

"I was in high school at the time [of the Kennedy White House]," said Sprouse, 49. "Jackie was so graceful. I loved when she introduced classical music into the White House. The Kennedy years were an inspiration to me. That's why I became a teacher."

—JEFF SCHNAUFER